

CHARLES SHEPHERD, NEWPORT, VT., OCTOBER 11, 1894.

INTERVIEWED BY RICHARD RATHBUN.

Q. How long have you been on Lake Memphremagog?

A. Since I was born; I belong on the Canada side.

Q. Have you ever done any fishing?

A. I have, but not for market. John Holt-ham and Mr. Babinoz are both old fishermen at the Mountain House; and a Mr. Young, who comes here from down the country, gets more fish than any one else on the lake.

Q. Is he a market fisherman?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. In what part of the lake at the Canadian side is commercial fishing carried on--market fishing?

A. Between the Mountain House, Rondeau, to

*Market  
fishermen*

*Market  
fishing  
side.*

Lord's Island.

Q. Do they do much south of Rondeau?

A. No, sir.

Q. Do they do much north of Lord's Island?

A. Yes sir, they troll considerably there.

Q. How do they fish for the market generally?

A. With the troll.

Q. Don't they use any nets?

A. No, sir.

Q. Not at any time?

A. No, sir.

Q. Haven't they allowed any net fishing?

A. Not without a lease. There was a time when you could lease a ground by paying \$5.00 for it. There is a spawning bed for lake trout and lunge.

Q. I thought that there were quite a number of gill nets licensed?

A. No, sir; they will not license you to

use a seine; I paid \$5.00 for a license to fish for fresh water herring.

Q. How is it on the American side of the lake?

A. They draw seines here.

Q. What does the law say you may seine for?

A. You may seine for fish for yourself.

Q. Why did they make them give up net fishing in Canada?

A. I don't know. Net fishing is not allowed on this lake. About two weeks ago they took a man's nets away from him.

Q. I understand that net fishing was stopped on the Vermont side of the lake?

A. I don't know as to that.

Q. Do you know where Mr. Henry's cottage is?

A. It is on the bay just south of the Canada line. Brook Point is the place.

Q. What are the commoner net fishes taken here that would be eatable?

A. The lunge is the nicest fish that there is; and there are perch, but they are generally small; I caught one weighing 2 1/4 pounds once.

Q. Are the so-called shad very abundant?

A. They used to be; I saw the time--December 2--on Lord's Island, when they drew ten barrels of them.

Q. Do you have black bass coming in here?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What other fishes have you?

A. The lunge, the black bass, the perch, the shad, and they put in some of these whitefish, but they are not plentiful; you will find plenty of them when the ice goes out.

Q. Have you any sturgeon here?

A. No, sir.

Q. Bullheads?

A. There are a few of them; we get them up



around the shores.

Q. How about the Canadian pike?

A. There are no pike, but they have yellow pickerel.

Q. Are they abundant?

A. Not very, but south of Newport they are. There used to be quite a few of those lings.

Q. Are there any eels?

A. There is any amount of them.

Q. And suckers?

A. The lake is full of them--you get them in the fall. That is about all the fish there are in the lake.

Q. Now taking the so-called shad of the lake, what are they most like? You say they are not a shad?

A. People here claim they are, but they are not; they are just like a herring; they have scales on them.

Q. How large do they grow?

A. I have caught them weighing five pounds.

Q. What would they average in size?

A. A pound or a pound and a half; it is very seldom you get one that weighs four or five pounds.

Q. When did they begin to put whitefish in the lake?

A. I cannot say, but I think it is as much as nine years ago.

Q. Did you ever see any of them?

A. Not of any size, but I have heard of fishermen catching them weighing half or three-quarters of a pound.

Q. Do they look anything like a shad?

A. No, sir; they are very small fish; they look like chubs.

Q. Did you ever see the shad from Lake Champlain?

A. No, sir; I never fished on the upper lake. They catch the shad illegally here

all summer. There was a man at the docks here this summer that was on the Canada side, and he got them in a net.

Q. Could you catch shad with a hook?

A. I never saw any one fish for them with a hook.

Q. They have the shad in Lake Champlain, and would you not think they would be the same--they agree with your description?

A. Perhaps so; they look just like a herring in the head.

Q. How long have these shad been here?

A. I think they have been here for 75 years; but I have seen whitefish weighing half a pound with not a scale on them.

Q. The whitefish and herring are very close together?

A. Yes, sir. The shad has a long peaked nose, quite like a herring.

Q. What is the nose of your shad?

A. Just exactly the shape of a herring's.

Q. How is the upper side of the beak--is it larger than the lower one?

A. Yes, sir; it falls over more than the lower one; they resemble a herring more than anything else I have ever seen. The nose is more round than a whitefish's.

Q. The lunge, as you call it--you have only one of those?

A. We have the silver lunge, the gray lunge, and the copper lunge.

Q. How do they differ?

A. They differ in color. The copper lunge is a short thick-set fish.

Q. Do you get the three different kinds in different depths of water?

A. No, sir; you catch them at the surface and at the bottom. In the summer, of course, you troll at the bottom with a heavy lead.

Q. When do you troll at the surface?

A. In the spring and fall. Now is a good time to troll at the surface. You will hardly ever catch them trolling with a light troll.

Q. When does the lunge spawn here?

A. The season used to be from the 15th of October to the 15th of November; it is now from the 15th of October to the 1st of December; you will get more fish now; I could get a hundred dollars now for all I would catch from now until the 1st of December. They go up the lake anywhere from the 5th to the 10th of October.

Q. Do they spawn at many places and come into very shallow water?

A. Yes, sir; I have stood in the water and you could feel them with your hands; they would swim right through between your feet.

Q. Has there been any decrease in the lunge?

A. They claim that there has been, but I

don't think there has. When I was 10 years old I used to go out before breakfast and get 8 or 9 of them; but now I might troll two or three hours each day and maybe I wouldn't get a bite in three days. Two weeks ago I went down with an old fisherman trolling with artificial bait, and we caught four inside of an hour; but that was owing to the bait. These old fishermen troll with the young trout for bait and they catch a good deal of fish.

Q. When does the shad spawn?

A. They come on when the lunge do; you will find them from the middle of October to the 1st of December. They run a little later than the lunge.

Q. How are they in abundance?

A. They are quite as plentiful.

Q. Are they as abundant as they used to be?

A. I don't think they are; we used to get

lots of them 10 years ago; I have seen a bushel and a half taken in a draw.

Q. You would never fish for them with a hook?

A. No, sir.

Q. When you went fishing for them, what sort of bait did you have?

A. Minnows.

Q. Are there any perch here?

A. Yes, sir; the shore is lined with them.

Q. Are your perch small?

A. The average is small, but you will get some very good ones.

Q. Do many of them weigh more than half a pound?

A. They will not average that, but you will get some larger.

Q. What could the market fisherman do if he got many of them?

A. He could sell them to these summer

houses.

Q. But he couldn't send them away from market?

A. No, sir.

Q. They are not regarded as a market fish?

A. No, sir.

Q. How about the yellow pickerel?

A. They don't market them.

Q. Do the sport fishermen fish for the pickerel?

A. No, sir.

Q. They wouldn't think they were doing anything fishing for pickerel?

A. No, sir. There was a Mr. Palmer on this lake this summer and I heard him talking about these pike. He claimed that those large ones that we had were tow trout. I saw them coming into the market here, and I couldn't tell the difference between the Lake Superior trout and what they call the



tow trout.

Q. Are there any good bass fishing grounds about here?

A. There are some black bass grounds between the Mountain House and Grand Island--  
(Round?)  
about all those islands.

Q. How on the American side?

A. They are quite plenty down here by <sup>H</sup>orse Neck Island.

Q. The lake is well supplied with bass for good sport fishing?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do they ever catch suckers and mullet?

A. No, sir.

Q. And you say they don't catch bullheads?

A. Only for their own use.

Q. I suppose there are a good many summer visitors here?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And they want sport fishing?

A. Yes, sir; they enjoy it.

Q. Where do they go--to different places?

A. Most of them stop at the Mountain House.

Q. You say they want the black bass?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do they want the lake trout and the lunge?

A. Yes, sir; the lunge is a favorite species; they catch perch very much, too--they skin them and clean them, but they are very wormy.

Q. Would a limited amount of net fishing hurt the sport fishing? Is it well to allow any net fishing in this lake?

A. No, sir; I think it would be better to have no net fishing. There was a man down here this summer and he had a thousand feet of gill net half across the lake. He let his net stay there and he would perhaps catch 50 lunge and sometimes more in it, and

as long as he had his net there nobody else could catch any lunge, for they were all running in the net. Another thing, they will put set lines in; one was put in 1,600 feet long with over 200 hooks on and they took it away; nobody knew whose it was. Nothing like that should be allowed. They will put them through the ice in the winter and then put on leaders; that should not be allowed.

Q. What kinds of nets have been used in the lake?

A. Seines.

Q. How many seines would be in use at one time?

A. There was a time when there were 75 or 100 seines in the lake; I have seen 75 on the same bar; that was 15 years ago.

Q. How long since they stopped seining on the Canada side? Did it gradually die out?

A. It gradually died out; that is, people

didn't care about paying for the leases.

Q. Was the law enforced regarding seining?

A. The officer would come along, and if he found you seining you would talk with him and give him a dollar and he would go away satisfied.

Q. Now they don't allow that?

A. No, sir.

Q. What time did they seine them?

A. All through the close season; from the first of October to about the 10th of December.

Q. What would they catch?

A. Shad and lunge; when they were on the spawning beds they would get shad and lunge together.

Q. Was there a close season for the shad during November?

A. No, sir.

Q. Was there any spring seining?

A. No, sir.

Q. Were gill nets used here extensively?

A. They used to use them 15 years ago; four or five fishermen used to use them.

Q. When would they use them?

A. In the close season.

Q. They wouldn't use them during the summer or spring?

A. No, sir; they never thought of that business then.

Q. What have they been using in the last three or four years?

A. They use gill nets in deep water; they used to use the gill nets on the spawning grounds in the close season; but for the last four or five years they have been used in deep water.

Q. Would they catch shad in them in the summer?

A. Yes, sir; a man took 200 pounds of shad

with them.

Q. In what depth of water?

A. I should think about 40 or 50 feet.

Q. What month was this?

A. It was about the 2d of October.

Q. What other kind of fishing has been carried on for market purposes?

*Trolling*  
A. Trolling.

Q. And that has been on the spawning grounds generally?

A. No, sir; they don't do much trolling on the spawning grounds--only in the summer, fall and spring. In winter they fish through the ice.

Q. In how deep water?

A. In different depths; it would vary from 25 to 90 and 100 feet.

Q. In what depth of water would the trolling be?

A. About the same.

Q. Is deep water trolling carried on extensively?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How many, would you say, are engaged in it in this lake?

A. About 15.

Q. Would you not regard that as a legitimate method of fishing?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Is it allowed in Canada?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And I suppose it is allowed on this side, too?

A. No, sir.

Q. You think that with trolling a hook the fish are given a pretty good chance?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Have set lines been used extensively?

A. No, sir.

Q. What is the objection to using set lines?

A. A set line is a good deal on the principle of a gill net. There was a time on this lake when you could pull up a bushel of minnows; I have seen lunge come in there early in the spring and feed on them, but you cannot get one now, because they are all eaten up by the perch.

Q. You don't think much of the perch?

A. No, sir; they have destroyed the minnows and the black bass are destroying them.

Q. Would the black bass be taken by deep water trolling?

A. They use a fly mostly for the black bass.

Q. What months do they generally fish for them?

A. July and August are good months with a fly.

Q. Are there many visitors here now?

A. There were some here last week at the Mountain House, and some of them are there



in June. I think people ought to have the right to draw the seine in the fall. You will not get but very few lunge. The season should be from the first of October to the 20th of November, because they do most of the spawning before. They spear for them.

*Seine  
Lunge*  
  
*spawning*  
Q. Have they speared a good deal during those seasons?

A. A great deal, and they have taken a lot of fish.

Q. Do you know whether they ever took any bass in the seines when they used them?

A. I never saw a bass taken in a seine.

Q. Did you draw a seine in the season when the bass would be inshore?

A. No, sir.

Q. The seasons when the seines were used were the time when the bass were away?

A. Yes, sir.

*give*  
Q. Did you ever hear of them taking bass in

gill nets? What is the size of your gill nets?

A. They are from four to six inches extension.

*lunge*  
Q. How would the lunge run in size?

A. They would average from one-half pound up to forty pounds.

Q. Do you get many weighing 16 pounds?

A. Yes, sir, I have seen several; I have seen as many as a dozen weighing from 12 to 25 pounds.

Q. But they don't want them so big?

A. Well, I don't know; everybody here wants big fish; but for the market they rather prefer the small fish.

Q. Do you see many fish on the shoals?

A. From the 15th of October you will see more fish on the shoals than you will in the close season. Ten years ago you wouldn't see a fish on the shoals.

Q. How about the whitefish?

*- whitefish*  
A. You will see a few whitefish on the shoals in the beginning of October.

Q. Do they take spawn from the shad?

A. No, sir.

*lunge*  
Q. But they do from the lunge?

A. Yes, sir. Many of those fish that we get are all rotten around the tail--mortified. They catch them in the close season, strip them, and let them go.

Q. Do they plant the fry of the lunge in the lake?

A. Yes, sir.

*depth of lake*  
Q. How deep is the lake?

A. 600 feet is the deepest, and that is on the left hand side going down--beyond the Mountain House about a mile and a quarter.

Q. How do the depths run generally?

A. From here to the line they will average from 8 to 60 feet; running out south from

the Mountain House across to Province Island it will not average over 20 feet; then, going the other way, the further down you get, the deeper it is, until you get to Bucklin's Point--Gravelins Bay.

Q. What will the deepest water be down that way?

A. 200 feet.

Q. Do the shores descend rapidly?

A. In different places the shore goes off rapidly, and in others the shallow water is on the side; the east shore is rapid and the west shore is shallow.

*abundance  
of fish*  
Q. As a whole, are the fishes as abundant in the lake as they used to be?

A. Bass and perch are more abundant than they used to be; shad are not as abundant as they used to be; I don't think lunge are quite as abundant as they used to be.

Q. The fishing is good here still?

A. Yes, sir, very good.

Q. Are there any suggestions you could make with regard to regulations? What do you think, in a general way, the regulations should be in regard to fishing?

A. I think there should be more appropriation to protect them in the fall; that is, they need protection during the spawning period.

Q. Do you think the close season ought to begin the first of October and end on the 20th of November?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Then you think they might allow seines after that?

A. Yes, sir; after November 20 for both the shad and the lunge. I don't think they should draw for the lunge at all, but you cannot catch the shad in any other way without a net.

Q. How long would you fish after the 20th of November?

A. Begin about the 20th of November and fish till the last of November; it is too cold to fish after that.

Q. Have you ever made a practice of shipping fish away to market?

A. No, sir.

Q. All the fish that are taken in this region are sold here?

A. Yes, sir.

*Law*  
Q. How about the enforcement of the law in this section?

A. The Canadian overseer is attending to his business now better than he used to.

Q. How about the American fish warden?

A. They look after them pretty well here; in fact, the fishing here is very little.

*Man*  
Q. Does the Canadian law fix the bass close season all right--what is their spawning

time?

A. I never looked for the fish on their beds; I never caught any of them; and I never did any flying at any time.

*lunge*  
Q. In trolling for a lunge what do you use?

A. A spoon and a grapple.

Q. No bait?

A. No, sir.

Q. You think that very few are taken either by trolling or in ordinary hook fishing, and that all you need to observe in that case is the close season?

A. Yes, sir. The Government makes a law and then forbids you drawing a seine in the close season; then it will make out papers and lease you a ground to fish upon and then prevent you from fishing.

Q. What is your idea about hatching fish artificially?

A. I believe in hatching fish if it is properly managed.